I brought this ruler along because it ...

... this just represents the anger of some of the students in the classroom the destroying of instruments while I've got my back turned and that’s I guess part of teenage-ness that little ruler wraps up how pissed off I am sometimes at the way kids just smash and break and tear and rip and when you’ve got an incy wincy tiny budget ...
also I brought January February and March

because I’ve survived them

so they’re safe you know we can file those three months
there’s heaps of eucalypts
particularly lots of iron bark trees

there’s a fantastic arboretum
we had a teacher training day out there
that was just fantastic
getting out there and learning how to use the outdoors

we were looking at some trees and there’s
these gum trees where you could just pull
doff little like a jigsaw
pieces off the tree
I got my daughter I just pulled off a few
of them and I said okay where do these
go so she was sticking them back on the tree
I just thought that was a great little
exercise in arranging things
she’s only six
there’s great
pieces that you can just see on the tree
amazing bark arrangements

this sort of signifies just being able to
go out and look at nature and
how the gum leaf is set up
the spores and the oil in the leaves and
why they’re
fire prone
and why they’re adapted to Australian conditions
my school is one of very few brick buildings in town
most of the houses are fibro or weatherboard
school the two pubs
the bank
and about four houses
are fairly new
they’re all brick

a very famous footy field
you can’t touch it
because we’ve won so many famous games on that
and some famous player first played on that field
before the town got its two other football fields
that’s where all the games were held
behind that we have
my computer room

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the original cemetery
more half the
the people buried there don’t even have
kids going through school so its
part of the original town
it’s classed now as the historical cemetery
there are broken headstones and there is a
memorial wall with some of the old
original headstones mounted up into new brickwork
they’re not quite sure where those graves
actually are but the headstones
are in the wall
this is what the kids walk past
and buses drive past
every day
so it reminds them of their local history
and quote the year 7s
when we’ve gone for walks that take us
through there

I’m named after that person there because
they were some far fetched relative
that's the main
local one
this is out of town
it's called the rock

a rock
it's a massive rock

there's a
swimming hole
it's a couple of [kilometre]s out of town but
lots of the locals go there because you've got to pay in town
if you're not there with the school it's about $2.50 for the kids to go swimming
but if you follow the creek line
out of town
heading east
there's about a 2 or 3 [kilometre] walk through the bush
to come to this swimming hole and it's free
do they jump off this top rock

oooo no
water's not quite that deep underneath it no

there's actually a viewing platform
and you're walking up
little
ladders and little sets of stairs and everything else
climbing up over all these balancing boulders
there's a whole range
of balancing
boulders it's all very rocky
out around here I mean my backyard
is grass until you get to the rocks

that's what it's like out there it's all these balancing
boulders and when you're standing on the lookout and looking down to the water
there's
this other
sheer slab of round rock that's broken away
it's broken in two pieces so one piece has fallen down
it's almost inverted itself as it's fallen so it's got this dome bit there and another
piece has fallen down sideways
it looks like a turtle
looks like an overgrown turtle from up above

there's
oodles more of these
round balancing sort of rocks
just everywhere and you sit down and you think

the rocks they're huge
the swimming hole would probably be about the size of 2 or 3 Olympic pools
in size it's a
very huge swimming hole

it's a huge
huge mountainous rock
via the road
it's about 8 [kilometre]s
and via the walk
its
about 3 [kilometre]s via the walk but the highway sort of goes off one way and
you've got to take a dirt road

our kids tend to have days out
when they just go
out to the rock

yeah the rock

so that's my place
In asking the teachers to bring objects from their places I was asking them to become aware of place. During the interview in the term following the workshop one of the teachers said to me:

after I got back after the workshop  
I had a look around the playground and I thought  
there’s that many native plants around here  
that’s a really big part of  
who I am and I should have taken more of that  
when I went up to the workshop

At times, when talking about their natural objects, the teachers showed a degree of wonder at what they had discovered in their place as show in the discussion (overleaf) following the presentation of the bindii. As noted earlier, Gaston Bachelard (1994:107) suggests that it is essential for the phenomenologist studying lived experience to begin with ‘the original amazement of a naïve observer.’ He illustrates this using the example of a shell:

Is it possible for a creature to remain alive inside stone,  
inside this piece of stone?

This is the type of amazement that a phenomenologist needs to nurture in their work. But this type of amazement does not belong only to phenomenologists. Given the time and space to contemplate objects from their place the teachers expressed a similar wonderment at the natural phenomena from their life world.

In presenting their objects the teachers did not simply describe their objects or talk about the physical places they were from. Rather, each of the teachers, without any direction from myself, talked about their relation to the objects, introducing members of their family and friends, and discussing their teaching and teaching relationships. In speaking about their objects the teachers shared stories of their intimate selves: stories of wonder, anger, joy, frustration, fun, reminiscences, being overwhelmed, puzzlement, and finding sanity. The objects are representations of deterritorialisations, of becoming-teacher.

The teachers also linked their objects to the history of their places and their own personal histories. There was an awareness of the past as present in and a part of the here and now; an awareness of multiplicities and assemblages from the past creating lines of flight in the present, lines of flight that are a part of their becoming-teacher. For the teacher who’s room overlooked the town’s famous footy field, and who would walk his class through the historical cemetry, these places and their histories were a
a bindi

they’re almost made out of timber you know

this one’s got a double prong they don’t squish at all

this one’s got three prongs which is what they’re normally like one big one and two side ones

I suppose it just needs to dig straight up they look like little mines

do they break off inside your foot

no they don’t they just you can just pull them straight out but you certainly know you’ve trod on them

like a jab with a needle though yeah they often bleed yeah

but they don’t stay inside you

no like none of them have broken off and are they from a plant or

yeah from the grasses grassy weed things do you actually know the plant they come off of

yeah it’s a flat it doesn’t grow into a bush or anything it’s just a a flat creeper
part of his experience of place in the present, and they connected his becoming-teacher with the histories of his pupils’ families and community. The teacher’s planner was a connection to other family members and their becomings, and the torn off calendar pages were a connection to very recent challenges of becoming-teacher. These connections were part of, and created rhizomes of, becomings-teacher. The past, present and future are all contained with the rhizome; they are all a part or becoming. When using photographs to help recall personal past experiences in particular places Laurel Richardson (Richardson & Lockridge 2004:71) writes that ‘what is past is not past’, and that this was ‘creating different writing problems around tense and so on’. I too have struggled with tense in re-presenting both my own and the teachers’ experiences. In a linear-time sense, these experiences are indeed in the past; however what is past is not past for we keep within our bodies our past experiences and they influence our experiences in the present and the future. In their stories about Copenhagen both Ernest and Laurel (Richardson & Lockridge 2004:119) write about a place in their respective pasts of which their accommodation brings back memories. Laurel notes the ‘power that Place has on our psyches’ and Ernest paraphrases Emerson who suggests that ‘we travel bearing our Giants—what we’ve done, where we’ve lived, what we’ve read, our experiences and memories.’ The teachers’ descriptions of their objects suggest an awareness of the past as part of their lived experiences in the present.

Place is an experience as much as it is a location or site. The teachers’ descriptions of their places and their objects consist of interminglings of things physical and non-physical, human and non-human, animate and inanimate. In attending to the various forms of content and expression of the ‘Body of the earth’ Deleuze and Guattari (1988:502-503) introduce the notion of strata. They suggest that there are three major strata: physiochemical, organic and anthropomorphic. But the strata are not exclusive: there is no reason to think that all matter is confined to the physiochemical strata ... similarly, not all Life is confined to the organic strata ... There are also nonhuman Becomings of human beings that overspill the anthropomorphic strata in all directions. The strata are capable of serving as sub-strata for each other and of colliding with each other, so they are not independent of each other, but rather they affect and at times become part of each other. And there are destratifications—unformed matter, anorganic life, and nonhuman becomings. It is in undertaking destratification that becomings occur:
every undertaking of destratification (... plunging into a becoming) must ... observe concrete rules of extreme caution: a too sudden destratification may be suicidal, or turn cancerous. In other words, it will sometimes end in chaos, the void and destruction, and sometimes lock us back into the strata, which become more rigid still, losing their degrees of diversity, differentiation, and mobility. (p.503)

Becoming-teacher is a risky business. It involves letting go of old, comfortable understandings of who we are, and taking on new identities (Danielewicz 2001; Britzman 2003). And in unfamiliar places, there can be even greater destratification. The high rate of teachers who leave teaching within the first five years of graduating (Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education 2003b:87) suggests that many becomings-teacher do end in chaos or a void. David Smith (1997:4) contends that:

Whatever the pedagogy of place may be, it has little to do with a warm cosy relationship with an imagined nature, and perhaps more to do with the courage to befriend one’s own mortality in the midst of the ongoing project of self understanding.

A pedagogy of place requires a self understanding—an awareness—of ones’ relations with place, and this requires courage. In creating an awareness of their places the teachers were indeed becoming aware of themselves in relation to place, in relation to the different strata which constitute the body of the earth. And in doing so they were becoming aware of their becoming-teacher.

places and becomings-teacher

The participants in this study were becoming-teacher. They were in places that could be mapped and charted; they were in mutual relation with these places; they embodied place; they created the places they inhabited; and their bodies were themselves places. According to the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of strata and destratification, it is in moving from the strata (from the forms and expressions of the earth) to destratification (to abstract relations with these forms and expressions) that we free ourselves from the known and actively engage in becomings. These deterritorialisations however, necessarily involve reterritorialisations. We reterritorialise to the comfort of the strata but we are no longer the same assemblage of multiplicities we were before our deterritorialisation. Every movement of becoming changes the multiplicities, and creates different assemblages. And so the teacher-place assemblages of this study were continually changing as the teachers engaged in relations with place.